12-1-1993

Dear Gerry,

Thank you for the latest info on Posner. November 22, 1993 was a very sad day for me. I put aside lecture notes and spoke instead on the assassination. Sadly, few of my freshmen students had any clue as to the basic facts of JFK's murder. Later, some even missed a multiple-choice question asking them to recognize the date of the killing. The media blitz in support of the Warren Commission made me physically ill.

I wonder about the motivation of those trumpeting Posner's work as the final chapter in the JFK story. Perhaps these people are trying to protect the reputations of those on the Warren Commission. One connection between the Warren Commission and some of the men involved with the Case Closed saga is the Council on Foreign Relations. Consider the following:

1. John J. McCloy and Allen Dulles were directors of the Council on Foreign Relations in 1963. Today Gerald Ford is a member.

2. The vice president and editorial director of Random House is Jason Epstein. He is a member of the Council. (See Who's Who entry attached.)

3. Stephen E. Ambrose is quoted as saying Case Closed is "absolutely brilliant, absolutely convincing." (See copy of Random House advertisement for Case Closed). Ambrose is on the staff of Foreign Affairs, the journal published by the Council on Foreign Relations. His job? Book review editor. (See attached Foreign Affairs masthead. Enclosed also are samples of Ambrose's reviews on JFK from Foreign Affairs).

4. Peruse the Foreign Affairs masthead. The Board of Advisors includes Garrick Utley (NBC News anchor/commentator), Jim Hoagland (New York Times), Charlayne Hunter-Galt (PBS MacNeil/Lehrer anchor), Felix Rohatyn (Time), and Theodore C. Sorensen (pundit-at-large, reputed Profiles in Courage ghostwriter, and Principal Keeper of the Camelot Flame).

5. Regarding the motivation of US News & World Report: The 13 September 1993 masthead of that magazine lists Mortimer B. Zuckerman (Chairman and Editor-in-Chief), Peter W. Bernstein (Executive Editor), and Christopher Ma (Deputy Editor). All three are members of the Council on Foreign Relations. (See attached US News masthead).

I find these connections interesting. Again, thanks for the

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Down Syndrome, 1991,
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1982-85; dean Sch. Law, U. Ark., 1979-82, ... 1982-85; dean Southeastern Bankruptcy Law Inst., prof. Kay, Houston, 1983-85; dean Southeastern Bankruptcy Law Inst., 1985-89; ptnr. King & Spalding, 1989—. bankruptcy law Emory U., Atlanta, 1985-89; ptnr. King & Spalding, 1989—. Author: Basic Uniform Commercial Code Teaching Materials, 1977, 3d rev. edit., 1988, Cases and Materials on Debtors and Creditors, 1973, rev. 3d edit., 1987, Debtor Creditor Law in a Nutshell, 1973, 4th rev. edit., 1990, Bankruptcy (3 vols.), 1992. Mem. ABA, Ga. Bar Assn., Tex. Bar Assn., Nat. Bankruptcy Conf., Am. Law Inst., Order of Coif. Democrat. Jewish. Office: King & Spalding 191 Peachtree St NE Atlanta GA 30303-1763

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The United States

STEPHEN E. AMBROSE

President Kennedy: Profile of Power. BY RICHARD REEVES. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993, 763 pp. $27.50.

Because it is a story of the highest drama told by a veteran journalist who has dug up all sorts of new information (and from documentary rather than unidentified oral sources), this book makes compelling reading. Reeves' technique is to stick as closely as possible to President Kennedy's point of view. At critical moments, such as the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile crisis or the coup against Diem, Reeves presents virtually every document Kennedy read over a several-day period, and most of what he heard, said or did.

For all the new material, however, some of it significant, Reeves' conclusions are not startling. Kennedy botched the Bay of Pigs because of his inexperience, aggressiveness and a flawed decision-making apparatus. In the missile crisis, he took the gravest possible risk over a relatively small issue and then lucked through. He was the central American agent in the plot against Diem, the point of which was to get on with winning the war.

What is missing here is not the factual content, not who said or did what, but rather any attempt at analysis. Not to excuse Kennedy, but shouldn't the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of Defense and Congress take some of the blame for the Bay of Pigs? With regard to the missile crisis, the author's technique allows him to avoid confronting such questions as: Did Kennedy have a right to make a promise binding on his successors, done without Senate approval, pledging the United States never to invade Cuba? If he had the right, was it wise? Did he miss a unique opportunity to get rid of Castro? Reeves quotes inside conversations that show the Kennedy administration believed Castro could not last another year—three at the most. What were the consequences? Reeves does not speculate. Nor does he ever say directly that Kennedy's goal was victory in Vietnam, that he had no intention of withdrawing and that his commitment reflected that of a large majority of his countrymen. But his documents make it clear that such was the case.

Reeves disapproves Kennedy's womanizing, his ruthless ambition, his lack of principles; but most of all he disapproves Kennedy's penchant for out-and-out lies, private and public. That he gives so many examples will lead some to dismiss the book as mere Kennedy-bashing. That would not be accurate.

More important, Reeves' book leads to the observation that presidential reputations go through some big swings. Truman was at 23 percent approval when he left office; today he is at about 90 percent. Kennedy was at about 50 percent when he was killed; he is all but worshipped today by a majority of the public, especially younger people. Yet with the scholars who look at him in depth, who study the record rather than watch the film clips, his reputation has sunk nearly out of sight. All of which means there will soon be a Kennedy revisionist school,